



Gator Times

USS NASSAU (LHA 4)

June 23, 2006

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Back Home, And Back to Work



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

Sailors and their family members man the rails as USS NASSAU returns from a scheduled six-month deployment May 4. NASSAU was the flagship of Expeditionary Strike Group 8, supporting Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in the 5th Fleet Area of Operations. NASSAU Sailors returned to find an overwhelming response from family, friends and loved ones waiting for them on the pier. Much deserved and needed leave was taken by Sailors to prepare for upcoming inspections and drills, including the Naval Board of Inspection & Survey (INSURV) visit. It wasn't long before it was "Shift Colors...Underway." See pages 4 and 5 for more photos from the homecoming.

The side of the Navy you don't always see

By FORCM(SS/SW) R. D. West

Warriors, a big hoo-yah to all of you out there. Back in from a great trip to San Diego and Pascagoula, Miss., to visit our warriors who are manning the precommissioning ships. I'm glad to report that I am still amazed at the level of quality and professionalism that I'm constantly barraged with.

Back in April, quite a few medical warriors from the Navy and our sister services joined up with the Military Sealift Command and took off from San Diego heading for the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia.

Along the way a bunch of good folks from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) like Project HOPE, Hawaii's Aloha Medical Mission, the Tzu Chi

Foundation, the Sahaya Foundation, the Philippine Red Cross, and the University of California – San Diego Pre-Dental Society, just to name a few, will be joining up with MERCY throughout her five-month deployment.

The MERCY isn't going out to conduct counter-terrorism operations, and they won't be patrolling for pirates or searching for submarines. In fact there's only one thing they are looking for – those in need of assistance.

I'm talking about the USNS MERCY and its current humanitarian mission. I'm talking about a lot of military doctors, nurses, and corpsmen partnering up with their civilian counterparts from all over this part of the world – as well as our Pacific region military friends and allies – to reach out to those areas where people need help.

And it's not just the medical folks either. Our SEABEES continue to be everywhere. Warriors from Naval Construction Battalion 40 joined the mission to lend their construction skills to projects like new sidewalks, painting, and building repair.

And backing it all up as ambassadors of good will is the Navy's Show Band out of Norfolk. Using the universal language of music, they are already a hot ticket at every port visit so far. I'm here to tell you that they have standing-room only audiences wherever they go.

OK, so I hear some folks saying, "Yeah, big deal, Master Chief." Well, actually it is a big deal, so let me tell you why and why it matters to you.

If you think back over the last 24 months, some of the Navy's biggest deployments efforts have been what? I'll give you a hint – USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, USS BONHOMME RICHARD, USNS MERCY, USNS COMFORT, USS BATAAN, USS IWO JIMA, among others – any of these names ring a bell?

If they don't they should because they were some of the ships responding to major natural disasters internationally and at home.

As the most powerful and profes-



sional naval force in the world, it's our responsibility to be able to respond to these catastrophes. Never mind that we are protecting peace and stability in a region when we help. That is important, but just as important we are showing our real power — our compassion, our generosity, and our commitment to our fellow man.

So why do you, the average Sailor, care? Simple. More than likely during your career (however long or short) you're going to get the call to assist.

We all will. And missions like MERCY's not only provide great medical care to people who need it, but it gives us the chance to train our response skills, to work with the host nations and NGOs so we have working relationships in place whenever the call goes out.

I don't know if you have seen any of the photos or stories coming from MERCY lately, but they clearly demonstrate how close a partnership we have with our regional allies and the NGOs. They also show why we'll need these partnerships in the future.

Go take a gander at their website photo gallery at http://www.cpf.navy.mil/news_images/Mercy/photos.htm. You will see Project HOPE, Air Force, foreign military and

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Loss of Personal Data Affects Many Sailors

By James R. Mueller
Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

On May 3, personal information on 26.5 million veterans was stolen from the home of a Department of Veterans Affairs employee who was not authorized to take such information home. The data, stored on a personal computer, consisted of names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, and some home addresses, telephone numbers, disability ratings and spousal information.

VA Secretary R. James Nicholson publicly announced the theft on May 22 and assured the nation that his department would contact every veteran affected and provide them detailed information on what they should do to protect themselves from identity theft and fraud.

Until you are contacted by the VA, every veteran should assume that they are affected by this loss of personal data, and act quickly to protect yourself from identity theft and fraud.

Veterans should contact one of the three largest national consumer credit bureaus below and place a free three-month fraud alert on your file and, if married, your spouse's file. The other two companies will be automatically informed of the fraud alert.

- Equifax: 1-800-525-6285, www.equifax.com

- Experian: 1-888-397-3742, www.experian.com

- TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289, www.transunion.com

We understand the VA is working with the national credit bureaus to develop a program that will extend beyond the three-month free period. The VFW firmly believes it is the obligation of the U.S. Government to pay for any additional credit protection, to include assisting veterans should they become credit fraud victims.

The VA established a national toll-free number, 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636), and website, www.firstgov.gov, for veterans to contact for additional information, but the answers provided are generic and do not answer the primary

question: "Am I on the list?" The VFW recommends that you assume you are.

Here's what we know about the data loss to date: It impacts up to 26.5 million veterans, to include some spouses. The VA said it affects all veterans who separated or retired since 1975, and older veterans if they filed disability compensation claims or used their GI Bill or home loan guarantees.

We also learned this week that World War II veterans who participated in Mustard Gas experiments may be affected, as well as current Guardsmen and Reservists who once served on active duty.

Clearly, we do not have a full accounting on which veterans are impacted, so I urge you to protect yourself and your families now, and I ask that you share this letter with others, especially older veterans who may not fully understand the ramifications of identity theft and fraud.

We will continue to keep you informed as more details become known. Please check our website at www.vfw.org for updates.

From page 2.

Navy professionals working side by side.

You will also see the Pacific Fleet Commander, Adm. Gary Roughead, out there too. Why? Because it's that important. The fleet commander knows that for the right response, we need to get there and partner up quickly, so he's involved.

We will help those in need, we will build trust and confidence in each other, and we will train for when the unthinkable occurs.

This comes from working together; learning about each other, knowing the protocols and procedures to make sure the mission gets done. We will respond more quickly with the right people and right equipment in the right place. Now people are being helped when they need it most, and we are better prepared to support our regional friends and allies while protecting stability and peace.

Warriors, there's an old saying that goes, "those who have the most, should give the most." As Americans, we have the privilege of living in one of the most prosperous countries in the world. And likewise our compassion and generosity is just as great.

So a big "hoo-yah!" to all my MERCY shipmates—military and civilian. You are doing great work, and we thank you for it. Keep charging!



USN photo by J0SN Ryan Clement.

LCDR Ronda Bouwens, a family practitioner assigned to the Medical Treatment Facility aboard the hospital ship USNS MERCY (T-AH 19), checks a young boy's heart rate during a Medical and Dental Civil Action Project while the ship visits the city on a scheduled humanitarian mission.

After 179 days, Honey, I'm Home!!!



USN photo by PH3 Andrew King.

ABH3 George Garcia embraces his wife after the USS NASSAU returned to her homeport at Norfolk Naval Base, Va., after completing a successful six-month deployment. NASSAU was the flagship of the Expeditionary Strike Group 8 (ESG-8), comprised of Commander Amphibious Squadron SIX, USS AUSTIN, USS CARTER HALL, USS WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, USS CAPE ST. GEORGE, USS NORFOLK, and Marine Expeditionary Unit TWO TWO (Special Operations Capable). The ESG successfully supported the Global War on Terrorism while conducting Maritime Security Operations in the U.S. Fifth Fleet Area of Operations and Theater Security in the U.S. Sixth Fleet.

The tug boat Karen Moran greets the crew of USS NASSAU as they return to Naval Station Norfolk.



USN photo by PH3 Andrew King.

Friends and family cheer as USS NASSAU ends its six-month deployment as the flagship for ESG-8 supporting Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in the 5th Fleet Area of Operations.



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

HT2 Lenton Edgy is all smiles while his son Elijah and wife Lydia are all hugs and kisses.

Gator In The Spotlight

SN(SW) Brian Theall

Navy experience: 3 years

Time on board: 2 years

Hometown: Rome, NY.

Why did you decide to enlist in the Navy?

I grew up listening to my grandfather's stories of when he was in the Army Air Corps. I wanted to join the service to not only follow in his foot steps and serve in the military, but so one day I would have stories to tell my grandchildren.

What was the biggest surprise for you in boot camp?

I was thinking, "What did I get myself into?" My RDC's name was HMC Mitchell. He was confident and could relate to me and he taught me a lot about military bearing. Whenever I feel down, I hear HMC's voice in my head saying, "Quit feeling sorry for

yourself," and that keeps me motivated still today.

What do you like most about the Deck Department?

I like the evolutions. Dropping the landing craft in the water is my favorite. I am 9mm and M-14 rifle qualified, so I'm also a member of the security force. Another thing about the Deck Department is there are people from all walks of life working together. We all come together as a team and get the job done safely.

What made you choose to become a seaman?

I signed up for the Seabees and they told me I would not be able to go to boot camp until August, but it was November at the time and I didn't want to wait that long. I was eager to join so I could start following in my grandfather's foot steps, so I chose to become a deck seaman.

What has been your most memorable moment since you joined the Navy?

I would have to say it's stepping up and going above and beyond. Having Boatswain Mate's accept me and appreciate all the hard work I do and my display of leadership abilities.

What do you do in your spare time?

I enjoy spending time with family and friends. I really enjoy spending time with my wife of course, so we take long nature walks. Soon my wife will give birth to our first son, so my free time will be spent with



Theall says life is full of struggles, but where you stand in the end is what matters.

my wife and baby, being a good Dad.

Who is your role model and why?

James Earl Theall, my grandfather. He had a family and lived the American dream. Even though during those times it was a challenge, they still made it work.

What advice would you give to someone in your paygrade?

If you are not where you like to be, work at improving yourself professionally. Get your qualifications done, get your warfare pins. In time your accomplishments will put you where you want to be.



USN photo by PH3 Andrew King.

VA Grants In-State Tuition for Dependents

From the Virginia State Education Website

In State College Tuition for family members was signed into law by Governor Kaine last week and will be effective July 1, 2006. The bill, introduced by Delegate Terrie Suit from Norfolk, passed unanimously in the General Assembly. A synopsis of the new law follows:

In-state tuition for dependents of active duty military personnel, provides that all dependents of active duty military personnel assigned to a permanent duty station in Virginia who reside in Virginia shall be deemed to be domiciled in the Commonwealth for purposes of eligibility for in-state tuition and shall be eligible to receive in-state tuition in Virginia.

All dependents of military personnel receiving in-state tuition shall be afforded the same educational benefits

as any other individual receiving in-state tuition so long as they are continuously enrolled in an institution of higher education in Virginia or are transferring between Virginia institutions of higher education. By extending in-state tuition to family members of military personnel who are living in Virginia pursuant to military orders of the sponsor, Virginia joins over 40 other "military friendly" states that recognize the hardships that constant PCS moves have for many of our college aged and college bound kids.

The Governor also signed into law another of Delegate Suit's bills that will allow military children to remain in the same school IF the military member is ordered to move into on-post quarters from off post and a different school district. Before this legislative change, the child might have been allowed to remain in the same school, but the family would have been required to pay "tu-

ition" to the public high school, middle school or elementary school.

Bill synopsis: Education; no tuition charges for certain children of relocated military personnel. Provides that tuition shall not be charged to children of active members of the military who are ordered to locate to military housing located in a different school division than the one the child is attending at the time of the order to relocate. Such children shall be allowed to continue attending school in the school division they attended immediately prior to the relocation and shall not be charged tuition for attending such school. The school division in which such children are enrolled subsequent to their relocation to base housing are not responsible for providing for their transportation to and from school.

For full text of the bill go to: <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?061+ful+HB695>.

Navy Clarifies Tattoos, Body Art, Piercings

**By JOCS (SW/AW) Bill Houlihan
Navy Personnel Command**

The Chief of Navy Personnel, Vice Adm. John C. Harvey, Jr., released a message April 21, clarifying the Navy's regulations regarding tattoos, body art and/or mutilations and dental ornamentation.

The message underscores Navy policy that already prohibits any body art deemed prejudicial to good order, discipline and morale or of a nature to bring discredit upon the naval service.

Four criteria have been issued to commanders to assist them in determining whether a tattoo, body art or brand should be permitted: content, location, size and whether the item is required for cosmetic purposes.

Navy policy stipulates that any tattoo/body art/brand that is obscene, sexually explicit or advocates discrimination of any sort is prohibited. Administrative separation could result for personnel disregarding this guidance.

"This is directly tied to the public

appearance of our personnel," said Rear Adm. Gerry Talbot, Director, Military Personnel Plans and Policy Division, Chief of Naval Personnel. "How we look in uniform, how we represent our Navy and our nation should be something we consider on a daily basis, on duty or off."

Location is as important as the content of the tattoo. Tattoos/body art/brands cannot be visible through the white uniform and cannot be on the head, face, neck or scalp regions. Items on the lower arm can be no larger than the wearer's hand, fingers closed.

The message also points out Navy policy restricting intentional mutilation of any sort. This is defined as radical

alteration of the body, head, face or skin for the purpose of an abnormal appearance.

Dental ornamentation; the use of gold, platinum or other veneers or caps used for decorative purposes is also prohibited.

Waivers for pre-existing conditions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by local commanders. They have discretion to determine whether removal is required, but items may be waived if they are not prejudicial to good order, discipline and morale.

Even if body art/tattoos/branding/mutilation occurred prior to the Navy's original guidance released in January 2003, commanders still have the option to recommend separation if medical authorities determine removal is not feasible.

"It is important to clarify our policy to ensure everyone understands the criteria," said Talbot.

Amplification on this policy, waiver applications and waiver eligibility can be found in NAVADMIN 110/06.



Even simple tattoos may not be allowed.

Bravo Zulu

Senior Sailor of the Quarter

BM1(SW/AW) James Gamble

Sailor of the Quarter

ET2(SW/AW) Clyde Anderson

Junior Sailor of the Quarter

ET3(SW/AW) Daniel Breen

Bluejackets of the Quarter

BMSN(SW) Takisha Bailey
QMSN James Rogers
OSSN(SW/AW) Geoffrey Fuller
SN(SW) Antonio Wright
PCSN Curtis Crutcher
AOAN Juan Clavijo
YNSN Hugo Valdez
ASAN Marlon Bevans
AN(AW) Abdul Alhassan
ITSN(SW) Truong Mai
MMFN Kristopher Sharrock

Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal

CAPT Shelton Williams
LT Jason Smith
DCCS(SW) John Billhimer

Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal

SHC(SW/AW) Connie Rix
CS1(SW/AW) William Germer
AS2(AW/SW) Dhouie Apoyan
EM2 Shazal Mohammed
IT2(SW/AW) Gerald Polite
SH3(SW/AW) Charles Agyeilarbi
FC3 Matthew Gaudin
ITSN Truong Mai

Letter of Appreciation

MA1(SW) John Byrd
PH2 Susan Milton
ADAN Hattori Chandler



Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist

AC2(AW) Renato Richie
AC2(AW) Thorice Armstrong
AC1(AW) John Fournier



Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist

ITSN(SW) Truong Mai



Frocked to PO1

ET1 Clyde Anderson
CTT2 April Brannon
QM1 Jennifer Harrison
AO1 Jacob Johancen
AO1 Loretta Moore
ABF1 Curtis Reaves
BM1 Cherise Richardson
CTR1 Johnathan Routszong
DC1 Thomas Ryan
AC1 Christopher Thornton
DC1 Carolyn Taylor



Frocked to PO2

BM2 Michael Cassidy
OS2 Corey Cook
AO2 Raymond Covos
AT2 Christopher Dillow
AC2 Ronnie Everett
PR2 David Faithful
IS2 David Feaster
CTR2 Chad Finder
YN2 Cynthia Flessert
YN2 Shaquan Gravesford
EN2 Dean Harding
AS2 Nathan Hartlaub
ET2 Daniel Henry
ABH2 Bryan Hernandez
CTT2 Mark Lupton
IS2 Sander Mathew
EN2 Antonio Morgan
IS2 Christopher Morris
OS2 Justin Noble
RP2 Boyd Peabody
MM2 Edward Rhoades
ET2 Joshua Robbins
AC2 Charles Sheffield
HT2 William Smith

AO2 Larry Towell
IS2 Tiberiu Truta
IT2 Dwayne Wells



Frocked to PO3

YN3 Michael Arache
ABH3 Wesley Aumua
BM3 Takisha Bailey
ABH3 Nandesh Baliraj
MM3 Antonio Barahona
AT3 Alfred Bartraw
AE3 Chad Bennett
AS3 Marlon Bevans
ABF3 Francisco Castro
BM3 Christopher Ceglio
EM3 Daniel Colombo
IT3 Chris Corso
OS3 Christopher Cullen
AD3 Roger Cunningham
ABF3 Keisha Edwards
ABH3 Rachid Elmorabeti
CS3 James Frazier
OS3 Geoffrey Fuller
ABF3 Timothy Fultz
BM3 Josphep Ghee
AO3 Bryan Goldsmith
OS3 Derick Head
BM3 Peter Howell
CS3 WeiKe Huang
GM3 Shane Hurler
AO3 Lee Jones
AS3 Jorge Loaiza
ABH3 Ulises Lopez
EN3 John Lynch
OS3 Yashica Marchmon
DC3 Samuel Moore
RP3 Jonathan Oliveros
ABH3 Antonio Pacheco
AO3 Ronald Pierre
MM3 Emanuel Prince
ABF3 Patrick Reed
BM3 Brian Ripoli
YN3 Heidi Romine
MM3 Sean Ropp
AT3 Robert Sutphin
MM3 Troy Thompson
ABH3 Richard Turnbull
OS3 Matthew Walker
ABF3 Jonathon Weber
ABF3 Doru Zaharuk